

Government Orders

When you are drafting a bill for legislation, Mr. Speaker, normally in a department like the Department of Transport, a copy of that bill prior to its printing is sent around to each federal government department and agency. Sometimes it is sent to provincial governments for their input.

I rather suspect that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is responsible for this outrageous, unacceptable, unthinkable exception that is present in this legislation. It is under clause 3. It is under "prohibition". It says that this bill applies to all vessels except in clause 2 does not apply in respect of any foreign ship used as a fishing vessel.

What is the purpose of this? What is the purpose of the Canadian government bringing in a bill which says: "Oh, this does not apply to a ship if it is a foreign ship and it is used as a fishing vessel". You start to think and wonder why an exception is made.

True, we have foreign fishing vessels all around the east coast of Canada. We have Bulgarian ships, Cuban ships, Denmark ships; that is, the Faeroe Islands and Greenland. We have EEC vessels, vessels from Iceland and Japan. We have foreign fishing vessels from Norway, Poland and the U.S.S.R. Then there is a section called "others". That is nine foreign nations, plus others.

What I am reading from is a sheet of paper that is called "the quota table for 1992 for foreign fishing vessels". These things are approved for 1992 by the Canadian government in consort with the nine other nations to allow these nations to carry on fishing activities around Canada's coastline. The bill says: "any foreign ship used as a fishing vessel is excluded from the act". Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting insert by the federal government.

It is very interesting because we are at a moment in time when we have an absolute crisis in the fishing industry. Even the fishermen raided the offices of the Fishermen's Union this morning in Newfoundland, and sort of beat up the place. I understand they smashed the windows and a few other things. These are frustrated fishermen, frustrated not so much at the Fishermen's Union but with the federal government, that the federal government would be in such a cosy position with these foreign fishing vessels that are described in this bill before us today.

Why, do you know that this year, for the first time in Canadian history, those very foreign fishing ships outlined in this bill, and excluded from this bill, are allowed to fish in our waters for Canadian quotas, hired by Canadian companies? That is why it is in this bill today. Now we have discovered it. Oh, yes. That is why it is there, because Canadian companies have been offered by this government foreign ships to catch their own quotas.

Some hon. members: Shame!

Mr. Baker: It is shocking. Here we have the best fish that comes out of the water, the fish that a man fishes over the side with a hook and line—that is the best fish that comes out of the water—not something caught by some gigantic 450-foot Soviet factory freezer trawler.

The Government of Canada for the first time in our history, for the first time since we joined Confederation in 1949, is allowing foreign ships to be used by Canadian companies. Mr. Speaker, would you blame the Canadian company that hires a foreign ship like this? Would you blame him? Would you blame a company that would hire a ship from the U.S.S.R. or Cuba to come up and catch their quotas in Canadian waters? Would you blame them?

Why, Mr. Speaker, those ships don't have a bottom line. Talk about free enterprise. They can go out for two months and fish, there is no bottom line. The government of Cuba owns those vessels. The government of the U.S.S.R. owns those vessels.

The Canadian government turns around at a time of desperation in our fishery and says to the fish companies: "All right, fish companies, you can use these foreign vessels described in this bill today; you can use them to catch quotas of turbot up in zone 2-J off the Labrador and northern Newfoundland coast; you can use Soviet vessels to go up on the Labrador coast; you can use Japanese vessels to go down off Nova Scotia and catch squid; you can use vessels that are from Poland and you can fish for redfish up on the northeast coast of Newfoundland; you can do all that. We see it today in the bill. Oh, what protection! What protection the Government of Canada gives to a foreign ship if it is used as a fishing vessel, it is excluded from the provisions of this bill. The NDP stands up here today and says; "Oh, we are in favour of more shipbuilding". Very carefully the critic said; "We want to maintain foreign fishing vessels in Canadian shipyards".